

FIRST AMERICAN EDITION SERIES

# AXA 2

• THE DESIRED •



by AVENELL  
& Romero

Cover: DENIS McFARLING

## ALSO AVAILABLE:

### FIRST AMERICAN EDITION SERIES

## MODESTY BLAISE



by Peter O'Donnell  
and Jim Holdaway

**MODESTY BLAISE • Top Traitor • The Vikings . . . . . 5.95**

Modesty & Willie in a taut espionage thriller, then up against a band of modern-day pirates.

**MODESTY BLAISE • Mrs. Drake • Uncle Happy . . . . . 5.95**

Mrs. Drake mixes psychism & spying, then Uncle Happy & his gang try to murder Modesty.

**MODESTY BLAISE • Jericho Caper • Killing Ground • Bad Suki . . . 5.95**

Central American criminals, a deadly 24 hour man-hunt, and a British drug-smuggling ring.



### FIRST AMERICAN EDITION SERIES

## AXA

by Donne Avenell  
and Enrique Romero

**AXA • The Beginning • The Chosen . . . . . 5.95**

Axa escapes the regimented safety of the city-domes to face a life of adventure in the wilds.

## VALKYRIE!

by FRED KIDA



**VALKYRIE! . . . . . 5.95**

All five of the classic 1940s encounters between Airboy and the lovely Nazi pilot, Valkyrie.



## THE SPIRIT

by *Will Eisner*

**THE SPIRIT by Will Eisner • The First 93 Dailies . . . . . 3.95**

The Spirit vs. Squire Sampson, Sphinx & Kaibosh — and saved by the beautiful Destiny Blake.

**THE SPIRIT Volume 2 • 200 Dailies . . . . . 5.95**

Gloria Fillum, Shanghaied by The Squid, Fanny Ogre's Vow, and the Death of Dr. Future.

**THE SPIRIT Volume 3 • 200 More Dailies . . . . . 5.95**

Mr. Porcine, Destiny Blake, Col. Max Mite, Ebony vs. Dr. Lear N, Lurk, and Ellen the Actress.

**THE SPIRIT Volume 4 • The Last 245 Dailies . . . . . 6.95**

Lucky Chance, Destiny Blake, Elsa the Nazi, The Cowled Killer, & Junius Sneezer's Formula.

## LADY LUCK

**LADY LUCK Volume 1 • 16 Stories . . . . . 5.95**

1940s 'good girl art' detective: 10 stories & intro by Klaus Nordling, 6 tales by Fred Schwab.

**LADY LUCK Volume 2 • 16 Stories . . . . . 5.95**

Capsule history of Lady Luck. Includes all 4 artists: Mazoujian, Viscardi, Nordling & Schwab.

The Spirit and Lady Luck ©Will Eisner, by permission.  
Modesty Blaise and Axa ©Express Newspapers, Ltd., by permission.

OTHER HANDS ON THE WORK \$5.95

# AXA 2

## • THE DESIRED •

by Donne Avenell and Enrique Romero



**Edited by Catherine Yronwode**

FIRST AMERICAN EDITION SERIES ©1982 by Ken Pierce, Inc.  
AXA "The Desired" ©1982 by Express Newspapers, Ltd.  
Published by Ken Pierce, Box 332, Park Forest, Ill. 60466.  
Complete lists for a stamp.

# AXA

INTRODUCTION by *catherine yronwode*

Here we are again, with the second volume of *Axa*. Response to the first collection of this British comic strip was overwhelmingly positive, and many readers asked for more. It looks like they will get their wish too, as we intend to continue reprinting the series in a set of matching volumes, just like this one.

What makes *Axa* so appealing? Is it the science fiction or the sex? Maybe it's a little bit of both.

The influences which formed *Axa* are rather obvious, perhaps, but noteworthy nonetheless. First, there is the post-holocaust world in which the series is set: a mainstay of science fiction stories for years. It combines the delicate nuances of moral guilt (if the holocaust comes, it will be *our* fault) with the requisite arena in which to stage an all-out life-or-death adventure series. *Logan's Run*, with its city-domes and partially contaminated wilderness, can probably be cited as the direct inspiration for the world *Axa* lives in. Not a startlingly original setting, but a more than serviceable one.

The second major influence on the direction Donne Avenell and Enrique Romero took in creating the strip was, without a doubt, the long-standing British tradition of baring the breasts of heroines in newspaper comics. To American eyes, this may seem more exploitive or provocative than necessary, but in England it is commonplace enough to rate little more than an

appreciative nod from the male sector of the audience. Female readers are not slighted either; there are certainly enough half-naked *men* in *Axa* to satisfy the womanly portion of the readership.

Who is *Axa*? Well, if appearances count for much, she is none other than Brigitte Bardot. Romero is not the first cartoonist to base a character's features on those of a famous actor or actress, and he does a very pretty job of it indeed.



Photo: Continental Film Review



Barbarella © Jean-Claude Forest

Bardot in a world of future terror and adventure brings to mind another classic comic strip: Jean-Claude Forest's *Barbarella*, a 1960s series which seemingly starred Bardot, and which, come to think of it, also contained its share of nudity – so much so that in the United States it was published by Grove Press, known at the time for reprinting erotic literature of historic value. Of course, when *Barbarella* was made into a film, it was Jane Fonda, not Bardot, who played the starring role, but Fonda never looked more sex-kittenish than when portraying that particular character.

It is into this mold – post-holocaust sex-kitten adventure – that Axa seems to fit, but despite the amount of skin shown, this is not merely a “good girl art” or “girlie” feature. Axa is a heroine, and her adventures in the frightening world of the city-domes and contaminated wilderness are proof that she is a bit more than a convenient excuse to sneak a little thrill into the morning paper. The story-line follows a close continuity, as do most adventure strips. For those who came in late, a synopsis might be of help:

In book one, which led off from the very beginning of the series, we saw Axa

leave the regimented life of her dome, leave her lover, Jon, and venture out in search of “freedom,” a concept she valued, but could scarcely define in terms of her prior experience.

Wandering into an area of wilderness controlled by “the Middle People,” Axa immediately ran afoul of their bizarre culture. The Middle People, led by their leader, May-or, spent their lives in blind worship of the pre-holocaust “Old People,” whose wars had brought them to the degradation they now lived in. Axa's new-found freedom was abruptly violated because she viewed herself as an independent being, while the Middle People, bound by laws which decreed that women are subservient to men and that sexual pleasure is forbidden outside of reproduction, would not tolerate her. One man of this tribe, Matt, fell in love with her, but his conditioning was so strong that he could not understand her desire to live outside his laws. He eventually betrayed her to May-or. Put into a “mothering center” as a prospective breeder, Axa finally escaped when a band of mutants and misfits raided the center in search of women with which to improve their own genetic stock.



Following after the now-repentant Matt, Axa set off to rescue the Middle Women captured by the mutants, but she was in turn taken prisoner and brought before their leader, Burt. After an abortive rape attempt, Burt confessed that he was actually in love with Axa. This display of “weakness” on his part infuriated his lieutenant, a character so deformed he could have served as an understudy for

Frankenstein's monster. Matt showed up at this point, and the two made their escape while Burt fought with his outraged second-in-command. Pursued through the ruined city by hordes of B-movie extra types, Matt and Axa made their last stand in a derelict bowling alley. Certain death awaited them as the mutant killers closed in, but at the last instant Burt arrived and made good on his love for Axa by sacrificing himself so that she and Matt could make their getaway.

Story number two, "The Chosen," opened with Axa trailing Matt home to the land of the Middle People. She really had no other place to go, after all, even though she knew Matt's love was overbalanced by his dedication to his tribe's repressive laws. True to form, Matt allowed her to join him and then betrayed her again. This time, her sword taken from her, she was locked into a "shrine," where it was hoped she would be "venerated, not copied" by the servile women of the tribe. Breaking free, Axa went to Matt's hut to reclaim her sword. Once there, she succumbed to her passion for him, and vice versa.



Discovered after their night of illicit love, the two were attacked by the entire tribe. Matt, wounded in the fray, escaped with Axa, but died of his injuries a short while later. Axa had little time to mourn the loss of her inconstant lover before she was attacked by a swarm of giant mutant bees. That menace safely foiled, she wandered into a graveyard of The Old People where, much to her surprise, she was met by her dome-dwelling lover, Jon. She

sank wearily into his waiting arms, but awoke to find him a traitor and herself surrounded by the armed guards he had summoned.

Taken back to the dome, Axa was "sanitized," "depersonalized" with drugs, dressed in a uniform, and brought before the dome's Controller for interrogation. As the drugs wore off, she overpowered the Controller and tried to escape, but was foiled by a variety of mechanical traps in her path. Her "escape," and the gantlet she ran was in fact arranged by the dome's Director. Watching her progress on a monitor, he engineered one final test — the temptation of security and love, as personified by Jon. Caressing her and offering her "peace of mind . . . pleasure for the body . . . gratification of the senses" if she would put on a regulation uniform, Jon tried his best, but Axa once more escaped — straight into the Director's private sanctum. There the tests were explained: the Director needed a person of great strength and personal initiative to undertake a mission across the sea on his behalf. In token of his good faith, he returned to Axa her sword, and she accepted the assignment. It is here that *Axa Vol. 1* ended — and our present volume takes up the thread of this story.

Read on — and enjoy.



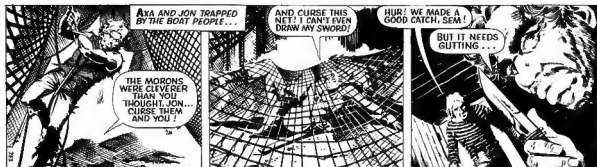
As usual, your letters of comment about our reprint line are much appreciated. Want to see more of Axa? Drop us a note and let us know! Look for more *Modesty Blaise* and *Mike Hammer* comics soon, and expect a few new titles along the way.











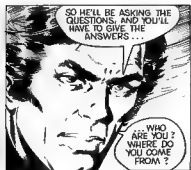














AXA HAS TOLD JASON  
ABOUT HER STORY...



YOU KNOW  
THE REST I WAS  
SHIPWRECKED  
ON THIS ISLAND  
OF YOURS  
THIS **WEIRD**  
ISLAND...

WHAT'S WEIRD ABOUT IT?

OUR HOUSE IS BIG.  
PERHAPS... BUT THEN  
MY GRANDFATHER IS  
A MILLIONAIRE.



MONEY COULD  
BUY ANYTHING  
IN THE OLD DAYS...  
EVEN IMMUNITY  
FROM THE **GREAT**  
**CONTAMINATION...**



YOU MEAN THIS  
HOUSE YOU AND  
YOUR GRANDFATHER  
... ARE LIVING  
RELICS OF  
THE OLD  
PEOPLE?

WAIT  
HERE



HOW DARE YOU LET  
THIS WOMAN SET FOOT  
ON THIS ISLAND, JASON?  
YOU KNOW MY RULE:

SHE'S  
GENETICALLY  
PURE, GRAND  
FATHER... AND  
TAKE A GOOD  
LOOK AT HER.



I SEE WHAT YOU MEAN!  
SHE'S BEAUTIFUL!  
A SPLENDID  
SPECIMEN!



WHAT DOES HE MEAN?  
I'M A WOMAN, NOT A  
SPECIMEN?

YOU'LL HAVE  
TO FORGIVE  
GRANDFATHER.  
AXA, HE'S NOT USED  
TO WELCOMING  
YOUNG PEOPLE TO  
HIS HOUSE



AND SUCH A **YOUNG** PERSON!  
SO FINE A **BODY!** SUCH  
HEALTHY **FLESH!**



AH, FORGIVE ME,  
MY DEAR. I'M  
FRIGHTENING YOU,  
AND THAT'S THE  
LAST THING I  
WANT TO DO...



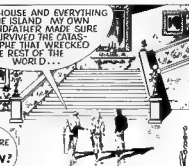
GRANDFATHER'S  
TRYING TO SAY THAT  
YOU'RE WELCOME  
ON HIS ISLAND.  
AXA, AND I MEAN  
**WELCOME!**

LET ME  
EXPLAIN,  
MY  
DEAR.



YOU'RE THE FIRST  
STRANGER TO ENTER  
THIS HOUSE IN A  
HUNDRED YEARS...

SO THE HOUSE  
WAS HERE BEFORE  
THE **GREAT**  
**CONTAMINATION?**



THE HOUSE AND EVERYTHING  
ON THE ISLAND, MY OWN  
GRANDFATHER MADE SURE  
IT SURVIVED THE CATA-  
STROPHE THAT WRECKED  
THE REST OF THE  
WORLD...



AXA ON THE ISLAND OF THE MILLIONAIRE ARKADYS...

AXA: MY GOD AXA...

WHAT'S WRONG? DIDN'T THE OLD PEOPLE WEAR CLOTHES LIKE THIS?

THEY WORE THEM, BUT I DOUBT IF THEY FILLED THEM LIKE YOU DO.

WHAT'S THAT? ANOTHER RELIC OF THE OLD PEOPLE'S?



IT'S KNOWN AS A **MOTORBIKE**. THIS ONE'S A HUNDRED YEARS OLD, BUT IT'S NO RELIC...



CLIMB UP BEHIND ME. I'LL TAKE YOU FOR WHAT THE OLD PEOPLE CALLED A THRASH...



THEY LOVED **SPEED** MAYBE THAT'S WHAT HURRIED THEM TO THEIR DESTRUCTION. BUT I KNOW HOW THEY FELT...



EXCITING, EH?

IT'S... **WILD!** BUT HOW HAVE YOU KEPT THESE OLD MACHINES RUNNING FOR A HUNDRED YEARS?



MY GREAT-GREAT GRANDFATHER BATTENED DOWN THE ISLAND WHEN THE **SMALL CATASTROPHES** CAME...

STOCK PILED PETROL AND FOOD, VEHICLES AND BOATS...



AH YES... HE WAS WHAT YOU CALL A **MILLIONAIRE**. ARE YOU ONE TOO, JASON?

HARDLY!



A **MILLIONAIRE** WAS SOMEONE WHO HAD A MILLION OR MORE UNITS OF MONEY. THAT'S WHAT THE OLD PEOPLE BARTERED WITH...

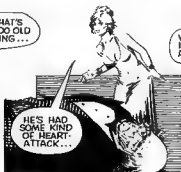


WE ARKADYS STILL HAVE THE MILLIONS... BUT NOTHING TO BUY WITH THEM, AND NO ONE TO BUY IT FROM.



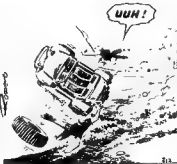
DON'T LET JASON DEPRESS YOU, MY DEAR. WE KEEP UP OUR STANDARDS ON THE ISLAND... AS YOU'LL FIND OUT...



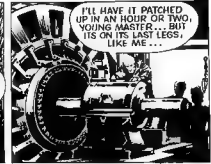
















AXA RUNS BACK  
ALONE TO THE ARKADY  
MANSION...



I WAS A FOOL  
TO FALL IN LOVE  
WITH JASON!

ALL HE  
WANTED WAS  
MY BODY... AND  
THE CHILDREN  
HE COULD FATHER!



A NEW  
GENERATION OF  
ARKADYS, TO  
INHERIT THIS  
FUTILE LITTLE  
KINGDOM OF  
THEIRS!



YOU'RE LEAVING  
US, DEAR? YOU'RE  
RUNNING AWAY?

NANNY...



YOU'RE ALL I HAD  
LEFT... NOW OLD  
JUDGE HAS DIED ON  
ME... YOU AND  
MASTER JASON...

I'M  
SORRY...



I HAVE  
TO GO...

YES, THAT'S  
THE WAY OF IT  
...THE WORLD  
OUT THERE  
IS CALLING  
YOU...



BUT YOU'LL BREAK  
MASTER JASON'S  
HEART...



AXA!

AXA!



HE HASN'T  
GOT A HEART!  
JUST A GRASPING  
FIST LIKE HIS  
GRANDFATHER!



BUT THEY'RE NOT  
GOING TO KEEP ME  
HERE IN THIS  
DECREPID LITTLE  
PARADISE OF  
THEIRS...



THERE SHE  
GOES!

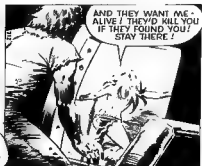
AFTER HER!  
I WANT HER  
ALIVE!



THEY'RE HUNTING  
ME, I MUST FIND  
SOMEWHERE TO HIDE...



THEY NEVER GO NEAR THIS DUMP OF OLD VEHICLES ... MAYBE IT REMINDS THEM THAT THEIR ISLAND PARADISE IS FALLING TO BITS ...



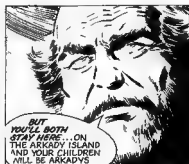


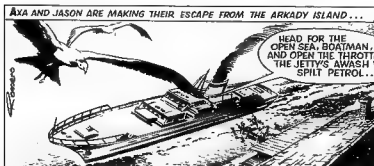


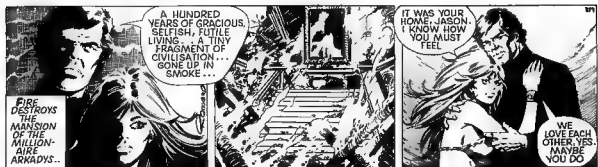




















AXA IN THE WEBBED HANDS OF THE GROTESQUE FISH-BOYS...

OH NO... THEY'RE DRAGGING ME UNDERWATER AGAIN...



BUT ONE OF THEM IS WORRIED! WHAT'S HE SEEN?



MEN WEARING UNDERWATER GEAR... REAL MEN...

373



THEY'RE ATTACKING THE FISH-BOYS...



... WITH SPEAR-GUNS!



AAARGH!

GAH!



WHO ARE THESE MEN? ENEMIES OF THE FISH-BOYS, THAT'S FOR SURE!



BUT ARE THEY HOSTILE TO US?



NO... THIS ONE SEEMS FRIENDLY...



AT LEAST HE UNDERSTANDS THAT NEED AIR TO BREATHE.



DON'T WORRY! WE'RE HUMAN, LIKE YOU, AND UNLIKE THESE SURFERS...

AAH!



SURFERS?

THAT'S WHAT WE CALL THEM! MUTANTS... HALF-MEN, HALF-FISH...











AXA CONFRONTS THE FEMALE RULERS OF THE SEA DOME...





THE PROJECT WAS BARELY COMPLETED  
WHEN THE **GREAT CONTAMINATION**  
CAME...

THE WOMEN  
WHO DESIGNED  
IT, AND THE MEN WHO  
BUILT IT, TOOK REFUGE  
FROM THE FIRE-STORMS  
IN THEIR GREAT DOME  
BENEATH THE SEA...



FROM THE START, THE  
WOMEN OF THE DOME WERE  
ALL INTELLECTUALS AND  
LEADERS... THE  
MEN BRUTES  
AND  
SLAVES...



CONTROLLED BREEDING,  
OVER THE LAST HUNDRED  
YEARS, HAS ENSURED  
THE SUPERIORITY OF  
WOMEN OVER MEN IN  
THE SEA DOME  
SOCIETY.

SO YOU'RE PARAGONS  
AND THEY'RE BRUTES!  
IS THAT ANY REASON TO  
VICTIMISE THEM?



MEN VICTIMISED WOMEN  
FOR CENTURIES, BEFORE  
THE **GREAT  
CONTAMINATION!**

TWO  
WRONGS  
DON'T  
MAKE A  
RIGHT!



WHILE YOU'RE HERE IN THE SEA  
DOME, YOU'LL OBEY OUR RULES.  
WHY, MAY I ASK, ARE YOU  
HERE?



I'VE BROUGHT  
YOU A LETTER  
FROM THE  
CONTROLLER OF  
THE DOME  
CITY... ACROSS  
THE SEA...



I SHALL CONSIDER  
THIS. INGRID WILL  
TAKE YOU TO THE  
WOMEN'S QUARTERS  
AND SEE TO YOUR  
COMFORT



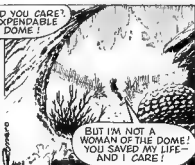
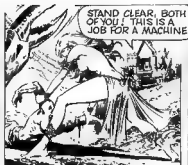
YOU CAN'T CHANGE  
ANYTHING THAT'S REALLY  
ME! I'M NOT STAYING  
HERE ANYWAY, IN THIS  
PLEASURE DOME OF  
YOURS UNDER  
THE SEA!

YOU'LL NEED  
PROPER CLOTHES  
INSTEAD OF THOSE RAGS.  
I SUPPOSE WE CAN'T  
CHANGE YOUR NAME?



YOU'LL STAY HERE  
UNTIL LEONORE HAS  
CONSIDERED THE  
LETTER YOU BROUGHT  
... BY THEN YOU MAY  
HAVE CHANGED  
YOUR MIND...

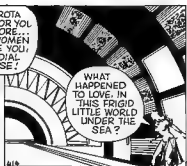












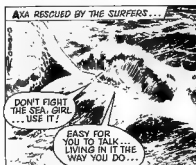
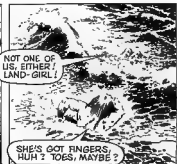




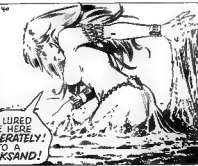
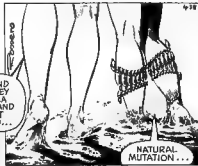


I DON'T WANT  
TO BE SUPERIOR  
TO MEN! I DON'T  
WANT POWER  
OVER THEM!

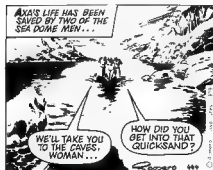






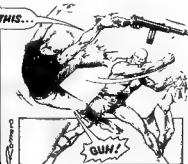














A MALE REBELLION!



THERE'S FIFTY MEN  
IN THE ACCESS TUBE,  
WAITING FOR ME TO  
JUST TAKE 'EM TO  
THE DOME!



WARN THE  
GUARDS AT  
THE TUBE,  
LEONORE!

WHAT WITH? PUGH  
WRECKED THE  
INTERCOM!



YOU HELPED THOSE  
MALE BRUTES, AXA!  
YOU BETRAYED YOUR  
OWN SEX!



PUGH  
SWORE  
THERE'D  
BE NO  
VIOLENCE!

BUT THE MONITOR  
SCREEN DOESN'T  
LIE...



AGH!

JASON!  
I'VE HANDLED  
THE GUARDS!  
BRING THE  
MEN IN!



DID YOU  
HAVE TO  
KILL THE  
POOR  
DEVILS?

IT WAS THAT  
BITCH OF YOURS  
WHO SCREWED UP  
THE ORIGINAL PLAN!



AXA?

SHE  
WARNED  
THE RULERS  
WHAT WAS  
HAPPENING  
... BEFORE I  
SHUT HER  
MOUTH...



YOU'VE KILLED AXA, TOO?

GO AND F ND OUT!  
THE REST OF US HAVE  
GOT WORK TO DO!



AXA! I WAS  
AFRAID YOU WERE  
DEAD!

OH, JASON!



BUT THAT BRUTE  
PUGH HAS HURT  
YOU!

IT'S ONLY A  
SCRATCH...



YOUR CONCERN FOR  
EACH OTHER IS  
TOUCHING DOES IT  
EXTEND TO US  
WHOM YOU'VE  
BETRAYED?











